Los Angeles Times

$2.75 DESIGNATED AREAS HIGHER © 2017 WSCE TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2017 latimes.com

ELAINE THOMPSON Associated Press

3 KILLED IN AMTRAK DERAILMENT

The Amtrak Cascades Train 501 out of Seattle jumped the tracks near a bridge over Interstate 5 in DuPont, Wash., during an inaugural trip. Some of its cars plunged into traffic. "I was sleeping," one rider said. "Then I was flying through the air." **NATION, A5**

Fire relief funds on the table

Congress proposes an $81-billion disaster aid package, including money for California wildfire recovery.

BY LISA MASCARO

WASHINGTON — Congress is set to consider an $81-billion disaster aid package that includes wildfire recovery money for California and other Western states as well as hurricane relief with a price tag reflecting a year of record-setting natural calamities.

The legislation, the text of which was released late Monday, would provide almost twice as much as the $44 billion the White House sought last month to cover relief efforts along the Gulf Coast and in the Caribbean.

Republican congressional leaders added more money after California lawmakers objected that the administration had failed to include help for areas damaged by wildfires and Democrats protested that the overall amount President Trump asked for was insufficient.

House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) promised Californians additional wildfire relief after the Thomas fire erupted in early December.

"I just want to say to the people in Southern California, we want you to know that we're thinking of you as you deal with these devastating fires that continue to tear through your region," Ryan said at the time. "We

[See **Disaster aid,** A6]

Trump veers off security script

BY BRIAN BENNETT

WASHINGTON — President Trump described the U.S. immigration system as a threat to national security on Monday, saying the "wrong people" are being admitted, even as he touched lightly on Russia's menace in a speech coinciding with release of his first comprehensive security strategy paper.

Strategy got short shrift in the president's half-hour address, however, as he reprised boasts about his election and the economy's gains. In notable instances, such as the treatment of Russia, Trump's words and those in the paper diverged significantly.

The president also included a lengthy indictment of unnamed predecessors, hammering them for "disastrous trade deals," short-changing the military, and "nation-building abroad" while neglecting the home front — all of which put U.S. security at risk, in his view.

"They lost their belief in American greatness," Trump said.

[See **Trump,** A4]

BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

CONGRESSIONAL REPUBLICANS have recruited mountain bike organizations to help roll back wilderness protections. One group wants to open the Pacific Crest Trail, above, to mountain bikes.

Bikes on the Pacific Crest Trail?

BY EVAN HALPER

WASHINGTON — When their vision of creating a scenic cycling trail through a protected alpine backcountry hit a snag, San Diego-area mountain bikers turned to an unlikely ally: congressional Republicans aiming to dilute conservation laws.

The frustrations of the San Diego cycling group and a handful of similar organizations are providing tailwind to the GOP movement to lift restrictions on the country's most ecologically fragile and pristine landscapes, officially designated "wilderness."

Resentment of these cyclists over the long-standing ban on "mechanized" transportation in that fraction of the nation's public lands presents a political opportunity for Republicans eager to drill fissures in the broad coalition of conservation-minded groups united against the GOP environmental agenda.

"People who enjoy mountain biking have just as much right to use the public trails as those who enjoy hiking or horseback riding," said Rep. Tom McClintock (R-Elk Grove) during a hearing for the bill he wrote, HR 1349, to allow bikes in wilderness areas. It was swiftly approved in committee and now awaits action on the House floor. "Our wilderness areas were never intended by Congress to prohibit human-powered mountain bikes," he said.

McClintock's interpretation of the Wilderness Act is hotly disputed, including by many mountain bikers, as well as people intimately involved with the act's drafting. But it appeals to groups like the San Diego Mountain Biking Assn., which complains that wilderness designations are interrupting plans for long-distance

[See **Wilderness,** A8]

Winds set stage for long battle

BY MELISSA ETEHAD, ALENE TCHEKMEDYIAN AND HAILEY BRANSON-POTTS

OJAI — Over the last three weeks, the Thomas fire has burned its way through the history books with a menacing pattern.

Powerful Santa Ana winds push flames through hillsides, mountains and canyons at a rapid pace firefighters can do little to control. Then the winds die down, giving crews a chance to regroup and mount aggressive defensive actions before the Santa Anas return.

Firefighters are used to battling the wind, but not this much of it. Southern California set a record this month for the longest sustained period of fire weather warnings — 12 consecutive days — due to the winds, which have made it impossible for firefighters to get a handle on what is now the state's third-largest fire on record.

Officials are using the latest reprieve in the winds to set new backfires and build fire lines that they hope will halt the blaze from advancing when strong winds return Wednesday. But the conditions are setting the stage for a long fight, with officials saying they don't ex-

[See **Firefighters,** A7]

Judge's career comes to abrupt end

Alex Kozinski retires amid allegations of sexual misconduct.

BY MAURA DOLAN

In his 35 years on the federal appeals bench, Judge Alex Kozinski had become known for his brilliant legal mind and stylish, provocative writing.

A Kozinski clerkship at the Pasadena 9th Circuit courthouse was often seen as a ticket to a similar position at the U.S. Supreme Court.

But it was his alleged treatment of clerks and other women in the legal profession that brought his career careening to a halt. It had been the subject of whispers for years, and on Monday, Kozinski abruptly retired after more than a dozen complaints from former clerks, externs and others accusing him of sexual misconduct.

IRFAN KHAN Los Angeles Times

U.S. 9TH CIRCUIT Judge Alex Kozinski apologized for making his clerks feel uncomfortable.

In interviews with the Washington Post and in blog posts, at least 15 women accused him of inappropriate behavior such as showing them pornography and improperly touching them.

After initially insisting he had done nothing wrong and pledging to fight the charges, Kozinski spoke with lawyers and family members over the weekend and changed his mind.

"I cannot be an effective judge and simultaneously fight this battle," Kozinski, 67, said in a statement distributed by the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. "Nor would such a battle be good for my beloved federal judiciary."

Kozinski apologized for making his clerks feel uncomfortable, saying that was not his intent.

He joins many other prominent men in govern-

[See **Kozinski,** A8]

South African ruling party elects leader

The ANC chooses Cyril Ramaphosa, who will also be the party's presidential candidate in 2019. **WORLD, A3**

ESPN chief's surprise exit

The president of the network, which has faced subscriber losses, cites substance addiction. **BUSINESS, C1**

Bryant's jersey numbers retired

It was a magical night for "the greatest" and for fans, Bill Plaschke writes. **SPORTS, D1**

Weather: Sunny. L.A. Basin: 69/48. **B6**

Printed with soy inks on partially recycled paper.

7 85944 00200 5